

# Our Holiday Supplement

## A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year



### THE BEST HOLIDAY.

There's a Fourth of July 'th its fireworks,  
An' crackers, an' rockets that hiss;  
It's a glorious day in its noisy old way,  
A day that is fine—all but this:  
You've got to watch out fer burnt fingers!

That sort of cuts into the fun,  
So, though it's a day to be longed fer, I say,  
I know of a dandier one.

Thanksgivin', 'th snarells an' turkey,  
'th pies of about ever' kind;  
'th its apples to eat an' its cider so sweet,  
Is a fairly old day, to my mind,  
But about all there's to it is dinner.

An' when you're filled up that's a bore,  
But you get a big dinner at Christmas,  
An' my! such a lot of things more!

There's presents of toys that are pretty;  
Of books most delightful to read;  
Of skates fer to slide, an' bicycles to ride,  
Geared up to a wonderful speed,  
An' then there are boxes full of candy,  
An' sugar plums 'long 'th the rest!

So, of all holidays that you long fer an' praise,  
I'm thinkin' that Christmas is best.

—Arthur J. Burdick.

### A Soldier Santa Claus.

BY M. QUAD.

Just outside the lines of the Third Army Corps as we went into camp for the winter of 1863-4 was a log farm house inhabited by a woman and three children—the wife and children of a Virginia farmer who had shouldered his musket and marched away with the Confederates two years before. There were other farm houses further away—other farm houses in front of other corps—hundreds of other Confederate war-widows and helpless children on that neutral ground, and we of the blue used to pity them as the nights came down dark and lonely and the north winds made one shiver and chill. We were not warring against women and children, and yet war had laid a heavy hand on them. Their scant crops had been trampled into the earth—their live stock driven off—their fences and barns burned—little left to satisfy their hunger or cover their nakedness. Many a soldier's rations were divided with gaunt-faced women and wolfish-looking children, and if it was "aiding and comforting" the enemy we were willing to take the chances.

The farm house I have especially referred to was not different from many others, but the woman and children were different. We offered again and again, but they would accept no food at our hands. Now and then the men on picket near the house saw the children searching in the frozen ground for potatoes, or the woman digging roots and wandering afar for stray ears of corn, but when coffee, bacon, sugar and hard-tack were offered them in kindness they turned away their heads. Even if left on the doorstep the food was not taken in. We were their enemies. They were hungry and cold and ragged, but they could not conscientiously accept aid at our hands. It was only when Company "B" of the Tenth took its turn on outpost duty near the house that we got a word from woman or child.

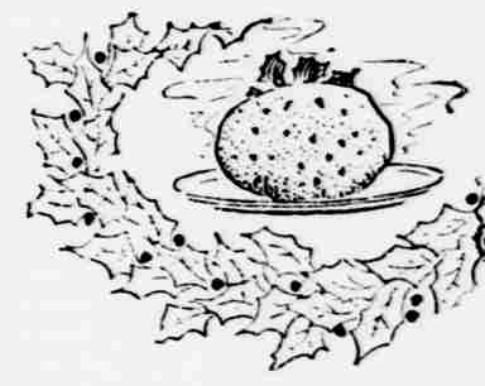
dren. Then it was Corporal O'Toole, big, good-natured and always wearing a smile on his face, who broke down the womanly reserve of the little ten-year-old girl. He found her half a mile from home one day and she was so overcome with the cold that she made no resistance when he picked her up in his arms and carried her to the house. When he kissed the frozen tears from her cheeks and said he had left a kid of her age back in the North who was motherless, the child reached up and put her arms around his neck. The corporal had conquered the child, but not the mother.

"It is kind of you, sir," she said as the soldier entered the house with his burden.

"Never you mind," the corporal would reply when we gazed him a bit over his failure to soften the mother's pride. "Christmas is coming along, and I'll play Santa Claus in a way to melt her heart. Pride or no pride, she can't stand up agin Christmas. I'll fill the stockings of them kids if I'm court-martialed and shot for it next day."

Three days before Christmas we got orders on the front to be unusually vigilant, as it was known that a number of Confederates whose families lived within our lines had been furloughed to pay a brief visit. Our picket was doubled, and every post and three men on it, and it was certain that we turned back quite a number,

dozen of us, and all day long we indulged in the hope that the woman's pride might give way on this one occasion, at least. The day had dragged along until an hour before dusk with everything quiet on our front, when a bushwhacker fired upon and wounded one of our pickets. This brought out a fresh order for vigilance, and a sergeant and his squad beat up the forest and captured two Confederate soldiers who were trying to enter our lines to visit their families. It was known that a third one had escaped, and just after dark Corporal O'Toole was ordered to picket the highway a quarter of a mile from our farm house. When he had reached the spot and posted his men he said:



his package to the floor, cut the string, and the frightened children gasped out exclamations of joy. Then he placed his haversack on the table and was turning away without a word when the woman rose up and said:

"Stop! I know you. You are the corporal. I—I thank you kindly, but—"

"It's Christmas eve, ma'am," interrupted the soldier, "and children are children the world over."

"But this food," she said, "I cannot accept it."

"You must, Confound it, woman—! I beg your pardon, ma'am, but don't I know that you haven't had a square meal for weeks past? I'm no enemy to you and the kids."

"But you must take it away."

"But it's Christmas eve, woman—it's the time to forget and forgive, and—"

At that instant the door opened and a stranger entered. No, not a stranger, but the husband and father—the Confederate soldier on a furlough to pass Christmas with his family. The corporal spotted him for what he was in an instant, and before anyone had moved or spoken he turned to the woman and said:

"It's Christmas eve and I present you with your husband and my best wishes!"

He strode to the other door and opened it and passed out to run into the arms of Jones, who had hurried up to say:

"Corporal, I've just tracked one of them Confeds to this house, and he's now inside!"

"Jones!" exclaimed the corporal as he laid his big fist again on the other's cold nose, "you're a confounded liar!"

"But I tell you I saw—"

"And you are stone blind! You haven't seen a Johnny for six months, and if you or Williams or Finegan say that you have I'll ham the three of ye within an inch of yer lives! Do you tumble to me or no?"

"Oh, well; if old Santa Claus puts it that way it's not for the likes of me to dispute him," replied Jones.

"That's better—a heap better!" chuckled O'Toole, "and now by the right flank—forward, march!"

And four days later little Susie came out to the corporal and shyly put her hand in his and whispered:

"Pa thanks you, and ma thanks you, and we all thank you, and pa went away last night and ma says it was the best Santa Claus she ever heard of!"

(Copyright, 1901.)



Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King;  
Peace on earth and mercy mild; God and sinners reconciled!"

CHARLES WESLEY

"And you must let me gather some wood and supply you with food," he replied.

"No, sir, I can accept nothing from your hands."

"But the children, ma'am."

"They must suffer with me, sir."

The corporal came out to the post and crammed a haversack full of food and returned and begged the woman to accept it, but she was firm. She even chided the children for the hungry look in their eyes. The woman had softened a bit, however, at least towards one of us, and from that day on little Susie was permitted to speak and walk with the corporal, and she did not hide from the rest of us as before. Kindness had converted her.

though our hearts were not in the work. As Corporal O'Toole said one night when he turned out to head the midnight relief:

"It's our duty to obey orders, and we'll be shot if we don't, but this turning back a poor soldier who hasn't had sight of his wife or kids for a couple of years, and who wants nothing now except to pass a Christmas with 'em, is no work for a soldier."

The day before Christmas the corporal made up a haversack of food, brought out a few simple toys and a box of candy he had sent up to Washington for, and he put on a wig and false whiskers and showed himself off as a pretty good Santa Claus. He had the help and encouragement of a

"It's all happened just right. Now I'll rig up and play the Santa Claus act, and you'll see me back here within half an hour. Keep your eyes peeled, and if there's anything suspicious send Jones along to notify me."

With the long, gray hair of his wig tossing in the wind, his venerable whiskers lying on his breast, his fur cap on his head, and a score of bells tinkling as he walked, the corporal passed up the road amidst the whirling snow with his packages on his back. He entered the farm house without knocking. The wife sat huddled over the poor fire, and the children sat on the floor quarreling over a bit of food. Santa Claus swung

The festival of the twelfth month is not, as the name would indicate, exclusively a Christmas holiday. It was celebrated in much the same fashion as it is now centuries before the Christian era. By the early Romans it was celebrated as the saturnalia, or festival to Saturn, and was marked by the prevalence of merry-making among all classes, rich, poor, old and young.

